territory and the Open India-Nepal border for activities inimical to India's interest and are seized of the matter. Governments of Nepal and India have agreed that they would not allow their territory to be abused by vested interests to launch activities inimical to the interests of either country. A bilateral institutional mechanism has also been evolved which includes the setting up of a Joint Working Group on Border Management and Home Secretary Level talks to jointly address issues relating to maintenance of peace and security in the India-Nepal border areas.

Revival of Cricket between India and Pakistan

†2652. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Cricket relations between India and Pakistan are being revived again;

(b) if so, by when the deadlock would be removed to start matches between the two countries; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) Indian Cricket Team has been playing with the Pakistani Cricket Team in multilateral tournaments. The team played the Pakistan team in several multilateral series last year.

Modernisation of Passport services

2653. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the demand for the passport services is on increase because of impact of globalisation: and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken by Government to modernise the passport services?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It is the Government's constant endeavour to modernise passport services and the measures taken by the Government in this regard are: computerisation of processing procedures, simplification of passport and miscellaneous services forms, decentralisation of passport services to enable submission at the district level,

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

introduction of machine writing of passports, introduction of the tele-enquiry system, launch of the Central Passport Organisation (CPO) web-site and also at selected passport offices, scanning of Index Cards etc. Machine readable passport booklets have been introduced with new security features making them tamper proof. A system of on-line transmission of Police reports has also been introduced in the Passport Offices of Bangalore, Mumbai and Chennai and this is proposed to be extended to other passport offices in a phased manner.

Settlement of Indians in Nepal

2654. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the former Nepalese Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, during his visit to India in last July had assured the Indian Government of his positive interest in permanently settling the country's Indian-origin population there;

(b) whether the Indian population devoid of citizenship rights, feels discriminated against in employment, land ownership and admission of children in State-run-schools;

(c) whether the Nepal SC's Judgement also denied citizenship rights to over 3,00,000 ethnic Indians recently as reported in The Hindustan Times, dated 31st July 2001; and

(d) if so, what remedial action Government propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) No, Sir. No such assurance was given by the Nepalese Prime Minister Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala during his visit to India during July/August last year in regard to Indian origin population in Nepal.

A number of people of Indian origin are settled in the terai region in Nepal. Some of them have been living there for generations. Many of them do not possess Nepali Citizenship Certificate as a result of which they do not enjoy facilities like land ownership, employment etc. in Nepal. There are, however, no reports of discrimination in regard to admission of their children in state run schools.

(c) and (d) On July 23, 2001, the Hon. Supreme Court of Nepal declared 30,000 (not 300,000 as reported by the Hindustan Times) of the 34,090 citizenship certificates issued under the aegis of a one man Commission appointed in 1997 by the then Government of Nepal as invalid. These citizenship certificates issued to applicants in 20 Districts of the Nepal terai belt were declared null and void on grounds of procedural deficiencies. Mr. Khum Bahadur Khadka, Home Minister of his Majesty's Government of Nepal, has informed the House of Representatives on August 05, 2001 that the Government would follow the right procedures and provide the certificates, within